

AUROVILLE – THE CITY-IN-THE-MAKING



Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

Mirra Alfassa, Founder of Auroville

The Auroville Charter

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular.
Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.
But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education,
of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage
of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards
future realisations.
4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment
of an actual Human Unity.

28. February, 1968



A Dream

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme Truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment.



In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones.

In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess sufficient knowledge to understand and adopt it nor the conscious force that is indispensable in order to execute it; that is why I call it a dream...

Mirra Alfassa

Greetings from Auroville to all men of good will.

Are invited to Auroville all those who thirst for progress and aspire to a higher and truer life.

Mirra Alfassa, 28th February 1968

Auroville – More than just a City

Auroville is a planned universal township for up to 50,000 people under development in south east India, located by the Coromandel Coast some 10 kilometres north of Pondicherry.

Aspects of Auroville can be found in other projects and communities around the world, but Auroville is the world's **first and only internationally recognised experiment in human unity**, also concerned with - and practically researching into - the future cultural, environmental, social and spiritual needs of mankind. Its global importance is emphasised by the fact it has been endorsed by UNESCO and other international bodies, and enjoys the full support and encouragement of the Government of India, its host nation.



During all our meetings, deliberations and planning, Aurovilians are acutely aware of how vast and how high their aim is, for “... in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity.”

“With the present morality of the human race a sound and durable human unity is not yet possible; but there is no reason why a temporary approximation to it should not be the reward of strenuous aspiration and untiring effort. By constant approximations and by partial realisations and temporary successes Nature advances”, writes Sri Aurobindo. This is central to Auroville’s aspirations and acts as perpetual encouragement for the residents to persevere. During all our meetings, deliberations and planning, Aurovilians are acutely aware of how vast and how high their aim is, for “... in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity.”

Auroville received the unanimous **endorsement of** the General Conference of **UNESCO** in 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1983. Governmental and non-governmental organisations in India and abroad have funded various development programmes. Donations have also been given by foundations in Europe and the United States, by Auroville International Centres and private donors from all over the world. The Auroville residents themselves have made a major contribution of financial resources and energy to the Auroville project.

In 1988, the Government of India passed the **Auroville Foundation Act** to safeguard the development of the International Township of Auroville according to its Charter. Under this Act, an autonomous institution, the Auroville Foundation, has been established with a Governing Board presently chaired by Dr. Karan Singh and an International Advisory Council. In his presentation of the Act before Indian Parliament, Sri P. Shiv Shanker, the then Indian Minister of Human Resource Development, said:

"Auroville is to be looked upon as a vision which has a great potentiality and this can be of tremendous service to our country and the world at large."



The site chosen for Auroville was a severely eroded low-lying plateau extending eastwards to the sea. An early priority for Auroville was the **environmental regeneration and reforestation** of the area, which in the late sixties was described as being in "an advanced state of desertification." Thousands of trees and shrubs were planted (to date over 2 million) and erosion control begun, with the result that the area now has a green and semi-forested landscape. Alongside this work, emphasis has always been placed on development using **non-polluting appropriate technology** and **sustainable energy generating systems**.

The expanding Auroville community today numbers about **2700 residents from 50+ countries**. Known as Aurovilians, they live in some 120 settlements of varying size and character, established on areas of Auroville land interspersed with village land over a total area of 20 square kilometres. They are engaged in diverse activities in the fields of agriculture/greenwork, education, health care, village-outreach, commerce and administration. All are volunteers who either get a monthly basic 'maintenance' in local Rupees, or pay for themselves partly or entirely out of their own pocket as a contribution to the township.



The **city plan for Auroville**, based on a spiral galaxy shape, incorporates four radial sectors (the International, Cultural, Industrial and Residential Zones) and includes a surrounding green belt. The four zones have as their focus a huge globe-shaped structure at the geographical centre of the township called the Matrimandir, the *soul of the city*, a place for silent concentration which will be surrounded by an area of beautiful gardens.

The International Zone



The most important idea is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither by uniformity nor by domination and subjection. Only a synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its true place according to its own genius and the part it has to play in the whole, can bring about a comprehensive unification which has any chance of enduring. And if this synthesis is to be a living one, the grouping should be effectuated around a central idea that is as wide and as high as possible,

in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, may find their respective places. This higher idea is to give men the conditions of life they need in order to be able to prepare themselves to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

The first aim will therefore be to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong and at the same time to bring them into contact with the ways of life of other nations, so that they learn to know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries of the world.” (Mirra Alfassa)

The Pavilions

The governing principle of Auroville is **unity in diversity**. The aim of the International Zone is the discovery and expression of this principle of unity in diversity. Life expresses itself in infinite forms of diversity, and this diversity is essential to life. It is the richness in colour and texture of the fabric of life realising itself first in the unit (the individual) and then in the collective body of the nation. To find fulfilment, the individual must first find his or her own true being, and so too the nation in order to fulfil its potential and live in harmony with other nations must also first find its own true law of being.

The founder’s vision for the International Zone was that every country with a well-defined culture should build there a **national pavilion**. Each pavilion will seek to express at the highest level the spirit and culture of the country they represent in form and activities. They will be centres for education and research into the genius of the nation, to encourage a deeper understanding of the various cultures of the world and of our common humanity.



Inauguration of the Pavilion of the Tibetan Culture, 2010

Auroville's significance and outreach

Auroville's work is not confined only to meeting the needs of the township, or to those of the wider bio-region. Auroville sees itself as a **place of research and experimentation for humanity as a whole**, not only into sustainable practices - such as in the fields of agriculture and energy generation - but more importantly into the establishment for the first time on earth of a practical human unity applicable to all people and all nations. As such it is a unique and important experiment, **role-model and potential catalyst** for changing global perceptions, lifestyles and practices for the benefit of all humanity - independently of political, religious or cultural influences.

Auroville has already gained national and international acclaim for its **environmental work**. Hundreds of acres of forest cover have been created; indigenous flora and fauna have been re-introduced or have returned naturally; tree seedling nurseries have been set up; and comprehensive soil and water conservation practices have been introduced. The development of ecologically sound agriculture without the use of pesticides and detrimental chemicals, plus application of up-to-date agro-forestry techniques, is also being actively pursued.



Auroville Centre for Scientific Research has pioneered in the areas of using **renewable energy** since. Use of solar energy for heating and generating electricity, bio gas for cooking, wind pumps for pumping water, bio diesel for generating electricity are common within Auroville. The work of renewable energy has also spread in other part of the country through projects in solar water pumps and solar schools. A program has been launched to eradicate kerosene lamps used by 84 million houses in India with solar lamps.





The Centre for Scientific Research, an institution recognised and approved by the Government of India since 1984 for its development work in **appropriate technology**, in particular for its use of ferro cement technology for buildings, is another focal point for future-oriented activities, together with the Auroville Building Centre (AV-BC). The latter is part of a national network of over 450 such centres initiated by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation of India (HUDCO). AV-BC provides regular training programs, offers consultancy, designs buildings and supervises construction incorporating its own cost-effective compressed mud brick technology. In 1992 it won the Hassan Fathy International Award for Architecture for the Poor; in 1995 it received an Outstanding Performance Award from HUDCO for its activities; in 1994 and '95 it was recognised by The Indian Ministry of Urban Development as the Best Building Centre in India; and in 1999 it received a gold medal for 'Excellence in presentation of special display on Building Technology' at the India International Trade Fair in Delhi.

Education

Auroville's multi-cultural educational system endeavours via its five schools to bring out each child's highest potential. It is increasingly based on a **free choice system**, which allows the children/students to choose their own subjects for study from the very beginning of their education. Sports and physical education are also strongly encouraged for the balanced and healthy growth of the child, plus artistic training to develop aesthetic faculties.



In addition to the children of Auroville, about 700 children from the surrounding villages benefit from Auroville's educational programs via another half dozen schools established and overseen by Auroville.

Health

Together with allopathy and dentistry, many other systems of primary health care are in use, including homeopathy, ayurveda, physiotherapy, acupuncture, reflexology, polarity, massage and other therapies, most of which are offered at the 'Quiet Healing Centre' facility located by the beach.

The Auroville Health Centre, equipped with basic medical facilities and staffed by a multi-national team of doctors and administrators, serves the Auroville community and about 200 local patients daily via its main building and some 10 village-located sub-centres. More than 30 local women health workers, trained by Auroville, are also active in 17 nearby villages, giving first-aid, advising on home cures and basic health education, and encouraging better nutrition by way of small family gardens in the villages. Auroville also conducts regular training programs in dentistry via its two clinics.

Commercial Activities

Nearly 175 commercial units now operate in Auroville. Their activities include handicrafts, graphic design and printing, food processing, electronics and engineering, windmill production, clothing and fashion, computer services, building construction and architecture.



These units have an important role to play in achieving eventual self-sufficiency for the township. Meanwhile, besides generating funds to assist the community in maintaining its basic services and infrastructure, the units also provide employment and training for large numbers of local villagers, enabling them to improve their standard of living and acquire valuable skills. At present, some 5000-6000 local people are employed in Auroville, with considerable financial benefits to the surrounding area. (An estimated minimum of 1.5 lakhs rupees - over 3,500 U.S. dollars - is fed out from Auroville into the local economy every day, the equivalent of around 4.7 crores a year, or well over a million U.S. dollars.)

Organization

Auroville maintains a **non-hierarchical society**. Bodies like the 'Working Committee' are elected annually from volunteers willing to dedicate themselves to meeting the basic administrative needs of the community. Most major decisions, specially of a controversial nature, are taken at the Residents Assembly or 'General' meetings.

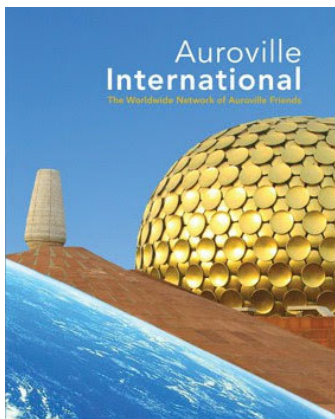
Auroville International

*Auroville International' (AVI) is a **worldwide network** set up with the aim of supporting the Auroville International Township in India. It has its legal basis in the Netherlands and has today member associations, affiliated groups and liaison addresses in 33 countries.*

The object of the Auroville International Centres is to work for the **advancement of the ideal of human unity by promoting the development** of the international township of Auroville, and by encouraging the realisation throughout the world of the aims and ideals of Auroville as laid down in its Charter and the numerous writings of Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Alfassa.



One of the main functions of Auroville International is to support Auroville in all possible ways, which includes presentations at national, international, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and to act as a channel for funds to Auroville's projects. Auroville International Centres endeavour to obtain a tax exempt or identical status, so that



donations made to Auroville can be channelled through the Centre, and the donor or the Centre can avail of tax advantages.

General meetings of Auroville International take place once a year, hosted by one of the centres. During these meetings major policy decisions are taken, and a board of directors is empowered to take decisions on general issues during the year.

<http://www.auroville-international.org/>

More information about Auroville: <http://www.auroville.org/>